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General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

96th plenary meeting
Friday, 18 April 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Fire at a tent city near Mecca

The President: This morning, before turning to the items on our agenda, may I, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, extend our deepest sympathy to the bereaved families of the victims who perished in a recent fire at a tent city near Mecca.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/51/780/Add.5)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/51/780/Add.5, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications dated 21 and 30 January and 4, 12 and 21 March 1997, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda of the fifty-first regular session of the General Assembly and organization of work

Request for the reopening of the consideration of agenda item 18 (a) (Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/101/Add.2)

The President: In his note contained in document A/51/101/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that he has received notification of the resignation of Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl of Germany from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and that the Assembly will therefore be required at its current session to appoint a person to fill the unexpired portion of the term of office of Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl, that is, until 31 December 1998.

In order to enable the General Assembly to take the required action, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 18, entitled "Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions".

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 18, entitled

97-85420 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

"Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions"?

It was so decided.

The President: Representatives are aware that this sub-item was allocated to the Fifth Committee. However, in order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this sub-item, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

Request for the reopening of the consideration of agenda item 18 (f) (Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/106/Add.1)

The President: In his note contained in document A/51/106/Add.1, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that he has received notification of the resignation of Mr. André Xavier Pirson of Belgium from the International Civil Service Commission, and that the Assembly will therefore be required at its current session to appoint a person to fill the unexpired portion of the term of office of Mr. André Xavier Pirson, that is, until 31 December 1998.

In order to enable the General Assembly to take the required action, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 18, entitled "Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission".

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to reopen consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 18, entitled "Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission"?

It was so decided.

The President: Representatives are aware that this sub-item was allocated to the Fifth Committee. Again, in order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this sub-item, may I take it that representatives agree to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

Request for the reopening of the consideration of agenda item 97 (b) (Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21)

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/51/864)

The President: Members will recall that General Assembly resolution 51/181, which was adopted by consensus on 16 December 1996, recognized, *inter alia*, the important contributions made by major groups, including non-governmental organizations, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and in the implementation of its recommendations, and invited me, in consultation with Member States, to propose to Member States appropriate modalities for the effective involvement of major groups in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

On the basis of this mandate, and following consultations with Member States, I have the honour to submit for the consideration of the General Assembly the text of a draft decision, which I propose to be considered under sub-item (b) of agenda item 97 "Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21".

In order for the General Assembly to take the required action, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 97.

May I take it that the General Assembly, on my proposal, wishes to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 97, entitled "Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21"?

It was so decided.

The President: Representatives are aware that this sub-item was allocated to the Second Committee. However, may I take it that, in view of time constraints, the Assembly agrees to consider the sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: In order that the Assembly may take timely action on sub-items (a) and (f) of agenda item 18

and sub-item (b) of agenda item 97, the consideration of which has just been reopened, I should like to propose that the Assembly proceed immediately to the consideration of sub-items (a) and (f) of agenda item 18 and sub-item (b) of agenda item 97.

As there is no objection, we will proceed accordingly.

With regard to sub-item (b) of agenda item 97, document A/51/L.70, which contains the text of the draft decision annexed to document A/51/864, will now be distributed in the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 18 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/101/Add.2)

The President: The Assembly will proceed to consider the appointment of one member of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

In his note contained in document A/51/101/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that the Government of Germany has nominated Mr. Klaus Stein to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl of Germany.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Klaus Stein as a member of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a term of office beginning on 18 April 1997 and ending on 31 December 1998?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it also that the Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

(f) Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/106/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will next consider the appointment of one member of the International Civil Service Commission.

In his note contained in document A/51/106/Add.1, the Secretary General informs the Assembly that the Government of Germany has nominated Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of Mr. André Xavier Pirson of Belgium.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl as a member of the International Civil Service Commission for a term of office beginning on 18 April 1997 and ending on 31 December 1998?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 18?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 97 (*continued*)

Environment and sustainable development

(b) Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21

Draft decision (A/51/L.70)

The President: In view of the desire of members to dispose of this matter expeditiously, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider the draft decision contained in document A/51/L.70. In this connection, since document A/51/L.70 was circulated only a short time ago, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure. However, I should like to remind members that the text of the draft decision was earlier made available to delegations in the annex to document A/51/864.

The relevant provision of rule 78 reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

I call now on those delegations that wish to comment at this time.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): Mr. President, we appreciate the work that you have done on this issue and the very constructive draft decision that you have put forward. We think that the draft decision represents a very important step in our consideration of the role of non-governmental organizations in the work of the General Assembly, in this case specifically special sessions of the General Assembly and, in particular, the special session on Agenda 21. We commend you also for the important role you played in bringing about the result reflected in the draft decision.

During the consultations you held on this issue, Sir, my delegation brought to your attention an ambiguity that was contained in the draft decision you circulated, and we indicated that we would review the text and come back to you perhaps with ways of correcting the difficulty that we had with the draft decision. We think that this is a technical issue; substantively, the position that my Government has on this issue coincides with the views that were expressed during the consultations by the Group of 77 and other delegations.

What we are trying to do by the amendments that I am about to offer is essentially to have the draft decision reflect the understanding that we all had about exactly who it is who will be invited to address the plenary of the special session.

Turning to the text of the President's draft decision, operative paragraph (a) reads,

> "Decides that major groups, including non-governmental organizations, will be invited to participate in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21".

The problem that we have with this formulation is that it gives the impression, or, is subject to the reading, that "major groups" is larger than "non-governmental organizations" — such as we know it — that are allowed to participate in the work of the United Nations. Those are only those that have a status with the Economic and Social Council or are on the roster. During our discussions, we, the Group of 77 and others understood that only those organizations that have Economic and Social Council consultative or roster status would be invited to participate. Again, the President's formulation contains an ambiguity. The purpose of the amendments that my delegation proposes is to clarify that so that it is clearly understood that only organizations and representatives of major groups that have roster and consultative status are invited to participate.

With that, I would like to read out the minor adjustments that we would make in the draft decision, with your permission, Mr. President.

In operative paragraph (a), after the phrase "major groups," I would insert the following:

> "as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by".

Following those words we would strike the phrase "including non-governmental". After the word "organizations" we would insert the following:

> "with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the roster".

The balance of the paragraph, beginning with the word "will" and through the end of the paragraph, would remain as it is. I would like to read out that paragraph as it would read:

> "Decides that major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the roster, will be invited to participate in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21".

Continuing, in operative paragraph (b) we would make a minor adjustment to conform with operative paragraph (a) as revised. We would insert, after the phrase "Decides also that", "representatives of such"; then after "major groups", delete "including non-governmental organizations, that" and insert "who". The paragraph would then read,

"Decides also that representatives of such major groups who cannot be accommodated in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session may be invited to address the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the special session".

In operative paragraph (c) we would insert the word "such" before the word "major" and delete the phrase "including non-governmental organizations" in the second line, so that it would read,

"Invites the President of the General Assembly to extend invitations to representatives of such major groups to participate in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly".

In operative paragraph (d) we would insert the word "such" before the word "major" in the first line and delete the phrase "including non-governmental organizations" in the second line, so that it would read,

"Decides that arrangements concerning the participation of such major groups in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly will in no way create a precedent for other special sessions of the Assembly".

I engaged in consultations with representatives of major groups and other delegations on these proposed amendments. It is my impression that there is understanding of the purpose of what we are offering, and I believe there is some level of support for these changes. I propose them for consideration.

The President: The representative of the United States has proposed oral amendments to draft decision A/51/L.70 as follows, and I am obliged to repeat this:

Paragraph (a) would read,

"Decides that major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the roster, will be invited to participate in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21".

Paragraph (b) would read,

"Decides also that representatives of such major groups who cannot be accommodated in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session may be invited to address the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the special session".

Paragraph (c) would read,

"Invites the President of the General Assembly to extend invitations to representatives of such major groups to participate in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly".

Paragraph (d) would read:

"Decides that arrangements concerning the participation of such major groups in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly will in no way create a precedent for other special sessions of the Assembly."

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): We have listened carefully to the proposals of the United States of America, and, on the whole, we believe that they represent a move in the right direction. Of course, we cannot anticipate the reaction of all others present to the proposals.

My delegation would like to propose one small amendment to the text now being distributed. In the last line of paragraph (d), we suggest deleting the word "special". The reason for this is fairly self-evident. The draft refers to participation by major groups, including non-governmental organizations, in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, and we are sympathetic to the idea expressed in the draft. However, we believe that measures regarding participation in the nineteenth special session should not set a precedent for future sessions of the General Assembly as a whole.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has proposed an oral amendment to draft decision A/51/L.70, and I am obliged to read it out. In paragraph (d), delete the word "special", so that the end of the paragraph would read,

"will in no way create a precedent for other sessions of the Assembly."

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): I am speaking on behalf of the Group of 77. I have taken note of the amendments that have been proposed to the draft text submitted by you, Mr. President. We are in general agreement, but we would find it very difficult to accept the amendment proposed by the Russian Federation. Our position is that these requirements are for the special session. The other issue, that of representation, comes under the subject of the overall reform process. These requirements are for the special session in June.

Mr. Pedroso Cuesta (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation has listened very carefully to the proposals made by various delegations. We support the opinion expressed on behalf of the Group of 77. Furthermore, we suggest, in connection with the proposal of the delegation of the United States of America, and since it was our understanding that the organizations enjoying consultative status with, or on the roster of, the Economic and Social Council are non-governmental organizations, that perhaps we should retain a reference to non-governmental organizations in paragraph (a). Instead of deleting the reference in paragraph (a) to non-governmental organizations, as proposed by the United States delegation, we could say,

(*spoke in English*)

> "Decides that major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by non-governmental organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council",

and so on.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): When I read out our proposals for paragraph (d), I omitted one reference that we wanted to include to make it conform to the formulations in the other paragraphs. Before the word "such", we would have to insert "representatives of", to make it conform to the previous three paragraphs. It would then read,

> "participation of representatives of such major groups".

We have no difficulty with the proposals of our colleagues from the Russian Federation and Cuba.

Mr. Humenny (Ukraine): We do not want to introduce any opposition in this matter. In brief, we will support the proposals of the United States, as amended by Cuba, and that of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, my delegation would like to propose that we add, after "sessions of the Assembly" at the end of paragraph (d), the words:

> "and the sessions of its Main Committees".

The President: Many efforts are being made to open up the paragraphs, and we may have a problem putting them all back together.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): I am speaking again on behalf of the Group of 77. Earlier, I registered the fact that the Group of 77 would have problems in deleting the word "special" from paragraph (d). We will go along with the other amendments, including the reference to non-governmental organizations accredited to the Economic and Social Council. However, removing the word "special" from paragraph (d) might create problems.

Mrs. De Jong (Netherlands): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. We were initially quite happy with the text as it was. We can live with the amended text that has been proposed by the United States as subsequently amended by Cuba. We have no particular problem with deleting the word "special" from paragraph (d), even though it is perfectly clear from its title that this draft decision is only about the nineteenth special session. But we can live with the text as proposed by the United States as amended by the Russian Federation and by Cuba.

Mr. Ito (Japan): My delegation was certainly happy with the original text as proposed by you, Mr. President, but at the same time we have no difficulty in accepting the amendments put forward by our colleague from the United States, as further amended by Cuba. But concerning the proposal by our colleague from the Russian Federation to delete the word "special" from paragraph (d), I would prefer to support the view put forward by our colleague from the Group of 77.

The President: My impression is that it would be possible to have general support on the basis of the amendments proposed by the United States and Cuba. I am not trying to be discriminatory, but I would like to propose that the Assembly agree to support the amendments offered by the United States and by Cuba, as I see support for these amendments from various quarters. The proposals by the Russian Federation and by Ukraine with regard to the reformulation of paragraph (d)

have not gained the immediate support of some parties, and I hope it will be possible for both the Russian Federation and Ukraine to go along with what appears to be a consensus position.

I do not think that accepting the language as amended would really make a difference to any party concerned. I offered my own formulation, and some members have proposed the reformulation of some aspects of this. I think we have a text that everybody can live with.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is no secret, Mr. President, that my delegation welcomed your text from the very outset. It was our intention to clarify that text further, which was the aim of our suggestion that the word "special" be deleted from paragraph (d). We continue to believe that adoption of this draft decision should not set a precedent for any session of the General Assembly, and it must be clear from the text that the draft decision deals specifically with the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

We regret that a number of delegations do not agree with our view on this. It is clear that there are at least two views to be discerned in the Hall this morning. We are willing to seek a compromise, and I would request you, Sir, to suspend the meeting briefly to enable interested delegations quickly to consult among themselves.

The President: As members know, I usually prefer to proceed expeditiously, to move things to a conclusion. But the delegation of the Russian Federation has requested the opportunity to carry out discussions with other delegations. I shall therefore suspend the meeting for 10 minutes to enable delegations to discuss the matter in the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The President: In accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on the amendments submitted by the representatives of the United States and Cuba.

I call on the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I would like to request, Mr. President, that you read out, for the benefit of all of us, the text of the draft decision as amended by the proposals of the United States and Cuba.

The President: The preambular paragraph is unchanged. The operative paragraphs read as follows:

"(a) Decides that major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and represented by non-governmental organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and on the roster, will be invited to participate in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21;

"(b) Decides also that representatives of such major groups who cannot be accommodated in the debate on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 in the plenary meeting of the nineteenth special session may be invited to address the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the special session;

"(c) Invites the President of the General Assembly to extend invitations to representatives of such major groups to participate in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly;

"(d) Decides that arrangements concerning the participation of representatives of such major groups in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly will in no way create a precedent for other special sessions of the Assembly."

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the oral amendments submitted by the representatives of the United States and Cuba?

It was so decided.

The President: Since the oral amendments submitted by the representatives of the United States and Cuba have been adopted, we shall proceed to take a decision on draft decision A/51/L.70, as orally amended.

I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Following the consultations that have just been held in this Hall, I should like to report that, with a view to preserving the consensus, the Russian

Federation supports the draft before us. We regret that our proposal was not supported. However, we believe that the provisions in the draft decision relating to non-governmental organizations and their participation in plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session create no precedent for any future sessions of the Assembly.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/51/L.70, as orally amended?

Draft decision A/51/L.70 was adopted.

The President: Members will recall that, during the consultations I held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/181, Member States expressed an understanding that I would select non-governmental-organization representatives of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, to participate in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly according to certain criteria. These criteria include the following: non-governmental organizations should have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, be on the roster and have demonstrated commitment to and involvement in the implementation of Agenda 21; there should be equitable geographical distribution; there should be gender balance; and representatives should be at the highest level.

These major groups have self-organizing and self-selecting mechanisms. I shall consult with these various focal points, and make a selection based on their recommendations.

Participation of major groups in the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly is in accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 51/181, by which the Assembly recognizes, *inter alia*, the need for their effective participation in preparations for the special session, as well as the need to ensure appropriate arrangements, taking into account the practice and experience gained at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, for their substantive contributions to and active involvement in the preparatory meetings and the special session.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 97.

Agenda item 19 *(continued)*

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Letter from Antigua and Barbuda (A/51/843)

The President: In a letter dated 24 March 1997, contained in document A/51/843, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations informs me of the wish of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to become a member of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. As delegations are aware, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1654 (XVI) of 27 November 1961, members of the Special Committee are nominated by the President of the General Assembly.

After consultations with regional groups, I have nominated Antigua and Barbuda as a member of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this nomination?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 19.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.